

## **NEWS FROM THE MONTANA LEGISLATIVE BRANCH**

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### **Legislative Council, Media to Discuss Media Access to Legislative Proceedings**

A group of lawmakers will meet with representatives of print and broadcast media Jan. 29 to discuss reporter access to legislative proceedings.

The discussion is one of several issues on the agenda of the Legislative Council, which will meet beginning at 8 a.m. in Room 102 of the State Capitol in Helena. The council is a bipartisan committee made up of legislative leaders and other lawmakers that provides oversight and administrative leadership of the Legislative Branch.

As part of ongoing strategic planning, the council has been discussing ways to improve the decorum of legislative proceedings. The council is interested in discussing media access to caucuses, where members of a given political party gather to discuss partisan issues. And some lawmakers have expressed concern that there is not enough room to accommodate a media table on the Senate floor and that television cameras can be disruptive during packed committee meetings.

The council will hear a report on legal issues surrounding open caucuses from Greg Petesch, director of Legislative Legal Services. Then it will hear from invited media representatives. They are:

- John Barrows, executive director of the Montana Newspaper Association;
- Greg MacDonald, executive director of the Montana Broadcasters Association;
- Ian Marquand, chairman of the Montana Freedom of Information Committee; and
- John Doran, editor of the Helena Independent Record.

Other members of the public will also be given an opportunity to comment.

In other business, the council will:

- Discuss the delegation of legislative authority to executive branch agencies through the rulemaking process;
- Hear about efforts to expand television coverage of legislative proceedings;
- Discuss legislator compensation and reimbursement;

- Discuss rules and guidelines for legislative committees that meet during the interims between sessions;
- Hear a report on managing electronic records; and
- Begin planning for the 2009 session.

The council's subcommittee on rules will meet Monday, Jan. 28, at 1 p.m. in Room 102 of the Capitol.

Full agendas for both meetings are available at [www.leg.mt.gov](http://www.leg.mt.gov) or by calling the Legislative Information Office at 406-444-2957. The meetings are open to the public.